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Letter dated 8 December 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On behalf of my delegation, I have the honour to transmit herewith the statement by Mr. Victor Yushchenko, President of Ukraine, on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the Budapest Memorandum (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 96, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yuriy **Sergeyev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 8 December 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement by Mr. Victor Yushchenko, President of Ukraine, on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the Budapest Memorandum

Today we mark the fifteenth anniversary of the Budapest Memorandum, which provided national security assurances to Ukraine on behalf of the United States, the Russian Federation and Great Britain. Later, China and France joined its provisions in the form of individual statements.

This document is unique, because the guarantees were provided to Ukraine as a nation that voluntarily forswore its nuclear arsenal. The Budapest Memorandum was signed right before the adoption by the Verkhovna Rada of its historic decision on Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear-weapon State and — as a successor to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics — to the Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START I), which is expiring today.

Let me recall that 1,950 units of strategic nuclear weapons and 2,883 units of tactical nuclear weapons were deployed on the territory of Ukraine at that time. It was the third-largest nuclear and missile arsenal in the world, more powerful than the nuclear forces of Great Britain, France and China combined.

During the last 15 years, Ukraine has not only been an exemplary nation that has voluntarily forsworn its nuclear weapons and entrusted its national security to the international community, but has also been taking an active part in strengthening strategic stability.

The world of today is rapidly changing, and we have to acknowledge that since the signing of the Budapest Memorandum it has not become safer. Unfortunately, not all States have refrained from using force to secure their foreign policy and economic interests. We observe dangerous trends in the field of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In fact, the number of nuclear nations across the globe has increased.

Europe is still divided into blocs, while Ukraine remains the largest European nation which is not party to any military and political alliances. Lying between two defence alliances — the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization — we perceive ourselves increasingly as a territory which has been assigned the role of a boundary land.

In spite of these circumstances, Ukraine remains committed to the principles of peaceful coexistence. Aspiring to become an integral part of the European security space, we have clearly defined Euro-Atlantic integration as our strategic priority.

The growing complexity of the global and European security architecture requires that Ukraine take effective steps to strengthen existing international security guarantees.

It is imperative to develop a new international legal instrument, as a follow-up to the Budapest Memorandum, which would respond to new challenges to the national security of Ukraine.

We are aware that this goal can be achieved only together with those countries which 15 years ago committed to fully guaranteeing Ukraine's national security as a fundamental prerequisite for the future development of our independent country.

Guided by these arguments, I addressed the leaders of the five nuclear nations — China, France, Great Britain, the Russian Federation and the United States of America — with the proposal to hold negotiations with a view to reconfirming and enhancing the existing security guarantees to Ukraine. We hope that this legitimate request of a nation which, by its own example, has proved to the world the reality of global nuclear disarmament, will be heard and supported.

Celebrating today the historic role played by the Budapest Memorandum in ensuring global and regional stability, we wish to recall once again our right to count on an effective collective approach towards Ukraine by the guarantor States, which has to be spelled out in a respective multilateral document.

We believe that such a step will not only serve as a factor to balance the security environment at our borders, but also enable us to eliminate the remnants of dividing lines on the European continent, becoming a reliable instrument for Ukraine's development as a peaceful, stable, prosperous and free nation in the heart of Europe.